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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS BRANCH

097.3
Z1092
No.1214

R & A No. 1214

MORALE IN GERMANY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REFERENCE DIVISION
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September 16, 1943

MORALE IN GERMANY

Summary: PW operations are not concerned with what people feel and think about their government, but rather to what extent these feelings and thoughts will and can affect their behavior within the framework of the enemy society. The Nazi system has been so devised as to render the factor of morale dispensable by controlling the activities of the individual (soldier, worker, entrepreneur, etc.) through a vast and rigid network of Party organizations and political leaders regardless of the subjective feelings and thoughts of the individual. The problem of morale thus becomes a question of the extent to which this pattern of Party control has been impaired or broken. This question must be answered separately for different strata of society.

Two recent changes in the government, the appointments of Himmler and Speer, have insured strong Nazi control over all phases of German domestic affairs. As both these Party men have cooperated consistently both with the industrial and military elite, their appointments weld these reactionary groups all the more closely to Nazi Party leadership and makes opposition unlikely -- especially as the Nazi constitutional system affords few opportunities for articulating any opposition in the form of political action.

The situation is somewhat different for the middle classes and labor. Here air war, land defeats, increasing misery, destruction of lives and personal property have tended to undermine Nazi Party patterns of control and to create a spirit of social solidarity without attachment to Nazi symbols. The possibilities for political action, however, are quite limited because of the corresponding political apathy and weariness of the German masses. Thus the chief hope for successful political opposition still lies with the underground movements.

MORALE IN GERMANY

(1) PW operations are not concerned with what people feel and think about their governments but rather to what extent these feelings and thoughts will and can affect their behavior within the framework of the enemy society. The answer to this question cannot be sought in what is understood by "morale" but rather in the sum total of the enemy's institutional and social arrangements. An entrepreneur, for instance, may dislike the Nazis; he may be convinced that they will lose the war. He may ardently desire peace and may even be willing to accept unconditional surrender. His morale may thus be said to be "low". What is the effect of his low morale on the operation of his armament factory? A worker may be a defeatist or even a revolutionist. Will he work less and can he work less? A soldier may not want to fight. Will his will have a chance of asserting itself?

Let us take the last instance first. The organization of the army may be such that even a cowardly soldier may be compelled to fight magnificently. If he does not, he may face death by the hand of the Field Gendarmerie. If he does, however, he has a chance of survival. The institutional arrangements may thus be such that the soldier can choose only between certain death at the hand of his own Field Police or possible survival in combat.

The entrepreneur in Germany is enmeshed in a network of authoritarian organizations such as Chambers, compulsory trade associations (Groups), technical committees, armament commissions and so on. The Nazi Gauleiters and the Armament Inspectors watch and control him. He has to produce if he wants to survive.

The worker is exposed to controls so tight as no other group in society. To revolt against the controls means either death or the concentration camp.

(2) The last example leads us to a general statement concerning morale in a totalitarian society. The essence of modern factory organization consists in devising a pattern of control which would prevent a drop in productivity even if the worker abhors the work which he performs. The conveyor belt system introduces an outside force into the process of production. The speed of work is no longer determined by the morale of the worker but by a technical mechanism. The worker who does not like the speed can merely quit.

This, however, is exactly what he cannot do in Germany. And not only the worker cannot do it, but nobody can drop out unless he is willing to risk life or freedom.

The system of National Socialism has been devised for the very purpose of making a repetition of 1918 impossible - that is, to make morale dispensable. Morale, so to speak, has become a democratic luxury.

(3) If we were to forget this simple truth, we should have to assume that Germany is already in a state of collapse. Report after report indicates that the people have lost faith in victory and that the fighting spirit is seriously impaired. Says one article on "Rumors and Criticisms": "If one were to believe the rumors and loose talk which can be picked up in the streets, it would make us all despair of our future fate, because, according to them, we have already lost the war anyway." 1/ The Party's prestige has suffered seriously; it is uniformly criticized and despised. "Above all, they criticize the Party and its work." 2/ Embarrassing questions are repeated: "Where are our political leaders; we don't see any uniforms." 3/ Productivity declines due to deliberate slow-downs and sabotage; fraternization between German and foreign workers is becoming common as reported even by the New York Times. 4/ Even middle class people attend opposition meetings and the Socialist and Communist underground is gaining strength. 5/

All this is most likely true. The question is to what extent does it affect the Nazi pattern of government and society which seeks to dispense with the morale factor in its operations?

A very intelligent P/W captured in Sicily with the Hermann Goering Division stated the German morale problem in an admirable way. "The Hermann Goering Division fought well as long as it was together. But when it was split up in groups of 40 men or less, the attitude changed." 6/ This statement confirms our thesis: so long as the organizational framework is more or less intact, bad morale will not impair the fighting and productive efficiency of Germany. The paramount question is, therefore: is the apparatus still intact? The answer must be given separately for the various strata of German society.

(4) Two measures have recently been taken to insure the full control of the Nazi party over society: The appointment of Himmler as Minister of the Interior and as Delegate General for the Administration of the Reich 7/, and that of Speer as virtual dictator of the German war economy. 8/

1/ Kilgour Cable quoting Muehlhauser Tageblatt, July 18, 1943.
2/ Salzburger Landeszeitung, July 10, 1943 (ND #1191).
3/ Hakenkreuzbanner, August 15, 1943 (ND #1221).
4/ July 31, 1943, from eyewitness account of German and foreign workers reaction to the fall of Mussolini.
5/ For detailed information see OSS Special Report on "Interrogations of Prisoners of War: Opposition to Nazis."
6/ Allied Forces Headquarters, August 10, 1943.
7/ See OSS Special Report #1130, "Changes in the Reich Government", August 26, 1943.
8/ See OSS Special Report #1194, September 13, 1943.

The two appointments concentrate all powers over the domestic life of the German people in the hands of two reliable Nazis. This, however, is but one aspect of the organizational changes. Both - Himmler and Speer - are closely cooperating with the most reactionary strata of German society; the Junkers and heavy industry. Himmler has consistently used his power as Commissioner General for the Strengthening of German Folkdom in the East to enrich members of the German nobility. He has handed over to them estate after estate in occupied Poland, Russia, and the Balkan states. 1/ Speer employs in his Ministry for Armaments and Munitions exclusively members of the Goering Combine and of the corporations in heavy industry.

These moves do not necessarily express an identity of policy of the Nazi party, the Junkers, and heavy industry. Junkers, industrial leaders, and the Nazis realize that the war is lost and that the only alternative to a crushing defeat with ensuing loss of wealth and power is a separate peace with either Russia or the western powers. But the Nazi leadership also realizes that neither Russia nor the western powers are willing to negotiate with them but that avenues of escape may still be open to the army leadership and its allied Junkers and industrialists.

The two appointments and the policies of Himmler and Speer thus in turn tend to close the avenues for the generals, Junkers and industrialists. They make the three groups of the German ruling classes, willing or unwilling, accessories of the Nazi party leadership. They intend to make a German Badoglio spirit infinitely more difficult, the more so because in contrast to Italy, there is in Germany no institution comparable to the Grand Council of Fascism or the monarchy. The very shapelessness of the Nazi constitutional system -- if such term can be applied to Germany -- makes it extremely difficult for Junkers, generals and industrialists to articulate their opposition and to translate their feelings into policies and actions. 2/

We may, therefore, say that in spite of differences between the views of the Nazi leadership on the one hand and the generals, Junkers and industrialists on the other, the control of the Nazi leadership over these groups in the ruling class today is as strong as ever before. There is at present no likelihood of the emergence of a politically powerful opposition within the ruling classes, except if manipulated by the Nazi leadership itself. These reactionary elite groups, however, might combine into anti-Party front in order to save themselves, if a further deterioration of the military situation should so strengthen genuine democratic elements inside the country as to threaten seriously the present control pattern for their own and the party's interests.

(5) While the control apparatus over the ruling groups is thus powerful, it has considerably weakened in so far as middle class and labor are concerned. The following outstanding facts deserve to be mentioned.

1/ Weekly Roundup No. 21, Central Europe, August 10-16, 1943.
2/ See OSS Report #1034, "Possible Political Changes in Nazi Germany", August 10, 1943.

Air raids have destroyed the belief in the inviolability of German territory and have, for the first time since the wars of liberation, made Germany a battleground. Their effects have broken the conveyor belt pattern of Nazi control at many places. According to a Swiss traveler, a new collectivist spirit has been created during and after air raids as a result of the general misery in which thousands have lost their possessions. This community spirit is not only restricted to the momentary situation but extends into the future - that is, the period of reconstruction after positive defeat. Civilian air raid victims are reported as saying that they "will have to pool everything and start afresh in common as the Russians did." 1/ This is also confirmed by a recent report of the Berlin correspondent of Stockholm Tidningen which mentions the "increasing material proletarianisation caused by the air war" and the measures of "pure Communism" (sic!) or "practical Christianity" adopted for their alleviation. 2/

Though this community spirit supports for the time being the Nazi system, it is almost certain that it carries within it the germs of the Nazi system's destruction. This new morale element is alien to Nazi regimentation for it may produce an attitude of national or social cohesion within activities without party symbols and organization. It also tends to allay fears of Russia, one of the most characteristic fears which the Nazis have successfully exploited so far.

Misery, defeat, air raids, destruction of property -- they all have contributed to the detestation in which the Nazi party is held. The party begins to show serious deficiencies in its main task of mass manipulation. Evacuation programs suffer from the inadequacy of party functionaries; transfer of large masses of people often removes them from immediate control of local party bosses, accentuates regional and class conflicts, helps the spread of subversive rumors, and impairs the effectiveness of the official Nazi propaganda line promising safety and retaliation. 3/ Other factors support this point even more substantially: The order of the SA leadership to SA men to wear SA uniforms and badges as often as possible, especially after air raids. Repeated exhortations to this end testify to the unwillingness of the SA men to expose themselves to contempt, hatred, and possible assault. Purges are carried out within the party. This is candidly admitted by the leadership of the NSKK (National Socialist Motor Corps). "Corps Leader Krauss", a senior group leader writes, "has ordered a purge within our organization. Anyone lukewarm or tolerating a defeatist attitude must go. It is better to have fewer men in our ranks but all of them fanatics. We must keep our knives sharpened. It is better for us to be feared than to be ignored." Or, as the Hamburger Fremdenblatt threatened recently: "The time has come, like 1934, when the chaff must be separated from the wheat." 4/

1/ Weekly Roundup #25, Central Europe, September 7-13, 1943.
2/ Stockholm Tidningen, August 29, 1943 (ND #1226).
3/ See OSS Report on Air Raid Morale.
4/ Stockholm wire #2260 quoting Hamburger Fremdenblatt.

The statement coming from the NSKK is of great significance because this party organization is an elite formation of a semi-military character serving with the army and the Organization Todt as a corps of supply.

Hitler's September speech, finally, though making a serious effort at a matter-of-fact analysis of the present political and military situation, did not hold out any definite concrete promises of victory. The only hope he invoked was that Providence is, as usual, working for Germany. But the Germans have also been accustomed by their military leaders to believe that God is always on the side of the stronger battalions, as Frederick the Great once said, and they realize that the United Nations have the stronger battalions.

Thus the ideological, social and political apparatus of the Nazi party, under the severe losses of the people, is no longer intact. But the crucial question remains to what extent these "breaks" in the control pattern of the Nazi system can be enlarged and exploited for successful political action against the regime.

(6) There is now no doubt that the majority of the masses are not Nazis. But that does not imply that they are anti-Nazis. As one P/W put it, "The number of convinced anti-Nazis is small, but so is the number of convinced Nazis." In spite of the inadequacies of their control, the Nazi leadership has probably little to fear from the masses of the people. Apathy, weariness and distrust are the outstanding characteristics of the masses. There is general agreement in all P/W reports on the point that what people want is "peace, bread, and security", not politics. The domestication of the German masses has gone far. Private sorrows, food, shelter, safety for themselves and their children is what they care about most. Fear and distrust prevents them from articulating even these private sorrows. Thus weariness, distrust and domestication play directly into the hands of the Nazi leadership which needs less coercive measures and a smaller terroristic machinery than it would need if the masses were politically active or even awake. This compensates, to a considerable extent, for whatever signs of strain state and party machinery show under the present political and military situation.

Political opposition thus rests with the underground inside and outside the Nazi party. It is the underground which, with the assistance of the United Nations, may transform a non-political community solidarity into political solidarity. It alone can light the spark which can transform apathy and hatred and weariness into action.